

Prayer Meeting

GOD'S REQUIREMENTS.

Week Beginning August 22. Micah 6:6-8.

The prophet has been foretelling the blessed effects of redemption. The birth of the Redeemer and the progress of His kingdom are discussed. His protecting care is assured to His people. The increase, purity and peace of his church and the consequent overthrow of his enemies, are declared. The prophet then solemnly reproves the people. He appeals to them to hear God's word. He avows that the Lord has a controversy with his people and he calls upon the mountains and the strong foundations of the earth to be witnesses as to the righteousness of God's cause and his just judgments. God then addresses the people directly, answering their complaints and responding to the discontent, solemnly challenging them to "testify against" him, and give reasons for their unfaithfulness.

He then recounts in brief outline his faithfulness to them. He had brought them out of Egypt and redeemed them from bondage. He had given them eminent instructors and leaders. Miriam is mentioned along with Moses and Aaron as one whom God had pre-eminently chosen and endowed for leadership. He reminds them of the particular incident of the consultation of Balak and Balaam about cursing and prevailing against them, and the Lord's constraining Balaam to bless them in every place, turning the fatal effects of the prophet's treachery away from the people and against the prophet himself and his fellow-conspirators. In these events they might see the kindness and graciousness of God's dealings with them, for these were but specimens of God's continual protection for which they had shown such signal ingratitude.

Verses 6 and 7 seem to contain the anxious inquiries of the apostate people who had become awakened to a realization of God's controversy with them. They feared the just penalties of their transgressions and realized the necessity of coming before the Lord and bowing before the most high God, but were troubled about finding acceptance with him. They were disposed to present burnt offerings and sin offerings which the Lord prescribed, but were in doubt as to their being acceptable. They thought of more costly sacrifices and oblations, but were still in doubt and alarm. They were even disposed to inquire whether God would accept the sacrifice of their own offspring as an atonement for the sins of their souls.

The prophet answers these erroneous and monstrous inquiries, which were the product of their own wilful alienation, saying: He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." These duties ought to have been well understood by the people and would have been if they had sought humbly to know God's will in order that they might do it. Their proposals, under the circumstances were absurd and displeasing to their God. They were the result of self-imposed ignorance and pride, which are the roots of superstition in all its impious and cruel forms. But a guilty conscience is awakened and clamors for rest, and this is the silly and odious response of the carnal mind. What power had these offerings to appease God, to ease the conscience and merit happiness, without repentance and faith and the sanctifying grace of the Spirit? The sacrifices prescribed in the ritual law were good for their purposes as typical of Christ and his redemption. They were the ordained means of expressing repentance and faith, but they were only incidental to that which was essential, namely the turning from sin unto God through the merits of him who was typified in ceremonial offerings. His merits and his grace were the essentials.

The duties required were more acceptable because they were more comprehensive and more spiritual. "To do justly" was to render to God and men that which was their due—giving the whole life to God and practicing truth, honesty and fidelity with men. "To love mercy" was to take pleasure in exercising compassion, forgiveness, kindness, showing positive, self-denying devotion to the welfare of others such as appeared so eminently in the life of our Lord. "To walk

humbly with thy God" implied a teachable, dependent, submissive, patient, thankful spirit, exhibiting a consciousness of weakness, folly, unworthiness and innumerable wants.

We cannot assume from this passage that the prophet meant, on the one hand, to ignore the ceremonial law, or to assume its abrogation. Nor on the other hand to supersede by his teaching, the necessity of a believing dependence on the promised Messiah and his mediatorial work. To fulfill these three precepts in spirit as well as in form requires that grace which comes alone through Christ's mediation, for neither is adequately obeyed until that obedience is rendered out of loving devotion and holy allegiance to him who was the hope and consolation of Israel and has been the foundation of character and the inspiration to obedience and service in all ages.

Young People's Societies

OUR COSMOPOLITAN POPULATION.

Topic for Sunday, August 29.—Home Missions: our Cosmopolitan Population. Luke 13:22-30.

Daily Readings.

Monday: Our invitation to the world. Isaiah 58:6-9.

Tuesday: Justice for all. Deuteronomy 1:15-18.

Wednesday: Kindness to all. Deuteronomy 24:17-22.

Thursday: Christ for all. Titus 2:11-15.

Friday: All for Christ. 1 John 2:1, 2.

Saturday: The Bible our bulwark. Deuteronomy 4:5-9.

Foreign missions at home is the real condition of things amongst us.

The immigration question is not simply a civic question. It entails great spiritual responsibilities. We have the gospel. Our immigrants in the main are without it.

There are said to be one hundred thousand or more Mexicans in Texas. Shall they have a pure gospel preached to them, or be left untouched by what we have to offer.

There are a hundred thousand Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Bohemians, Hungarians in Louisiana, besides two hundred and fifty thousand native French speaking natives. Have we a duty towards them?

We owe all these people of a foreign tongue a message of love. The free institutions which have attracted them should be the least of the benefits which they secure by coming to our land. They are here. What will we do with them?

The beginning of all the great churches in this country were from the population that moved into the land from foreign shores. Why may we not expect this class to recruit our churches still and become an element of great strength and power for the years to come?

No problem appeals more strongly to our patriotism than that of the proper assimilation of these foreign elements. Left alone they become in many cases from the very nature of things a menace to that which is distinctive in our civic life. To make them one with us should be the aim of all.

The gospel is the great unifier. Through its propagation there lies the strongest hope, because it affords the best opportunity, of assimilating these foreign elements. It reaches the profounder depths and the more hidden springs of character. Its influence molds and shapes the life. With the gospel of Christ prevailing we have nothing to fear.

The incoming classes may be difficult to reach, but that should only inspire to more vigorous efforts. The statistics of a year or two ago showed that one tenth of the immigrants were Magyars, Bohemians, Ruthenians and others of a very hard type to touch, that half were Poles, Italians, and Jews, that one half, numbering nearly half a million, were unskilled laborers. All these need the gospel as much as we need it.

A feature of our immigrant life which, while it is most natural, increases the difficulty of reaching these people with the bread of life, is the manner in which they mass together, in chosen localities, where observing to some extent their old customs and speaking altogether their own languages, assimilation is hindered. If we could send them the pure gospel in their own language more than we do, the results would be surer and larger and speedier.